



ועידת התביעות
Claims Conference
Conference on Jewish Material Claims
Against Germany

Claims Conference Holocaust Survivor Memoir Collection

Access to the print and/or digital copies of memoirs in this collection is made possible by USHMM on behalf of, and with the support of, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum respects the copyright and other intellectual property rights associated with the materials in its collection and makes good faith efforts to determine the copyright status of such materials. The Museum has a good faith belief that the materials in this collection may be made publicly available. The Museum welcomes additional information about copyright status. If you have additional information or concerns about the copyright ownership of materials in this collection, please contact the Museum's Library by phone at 202-478-9777 or by email at reference@ushmm.org.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

<https://archive.org/details/bib292232>

A NEW TALE FROM THE VIENNA WOODS:
"THE IDIOT'S 1939 VIENNA WALTZ!"

1

In Vienna in 1939 to be precise,
In another age of murderous strife
In a distant part of the globe,
Hate seared me for life
When I wasn't old enough to shave!

The only self proclaimed master race
On the face of the earth, in the universe,
Germans, Nazis, "Aryan" supermen,
Boasted with great fanfare to be racially pure!
Without knowing me, they decreed that I am not!

One rule the Nazis forced on us
Was simple and degrading (not for us) indeed:
"Jew, pig, when you see us approach on a sidewalk,
Get down into the gutter where you belong
And cross the street!"
I knew then as I know now,
Wherever they marched,
The messengers of hate and death,
That is where the gutter was and is,
And forever where they belong.

I told myself then, I forgot it not:
"How dare they,
The mongrels from the cesspool of hell,
Force me bow deep down
In the gutter to them!"

A few "racially pure" brown shirt Nazi boys,
Valiant, swaggering apprentice Teutonic knights,
With daggers on their belts,
Roamed on the same side of the street
Where three friends and I walked.

My friends were wiser than I!
Quickly they ran to the other side.
I was foolish to look for trouble.
Young I was, hot blooded,
Seething with ice cold fury.
To me right is right and wrong is wrong.

A NEW TALE FROM THE VIENNA WOODS: "THE IDIOT'S 1939 VIENNA WALTZ!"

2

I refused to step down into the gutter
And run across the street.

I remember vividly that bright, sunny day,
Lost in the flow of years,
As if it happened minutes ago.
I risked my life for the sin of pride,
When I walked calmly through the Nazi gang,
Head high, eyes straight, and expression firm.
I was too full with rage to be afraid.

One of the heroic Teutonic knights,
Lucky for me, forgot the dagger on his side,
Hauled off with his fist,
Hit me and blood gushed out
Of my now broken nose
Down my cheeks and lips
And over my shirt.
I was not afraid. I did not blink.
I did not run. I did not cry.
Quietly I walked, slowly, bloodied head held high,
Through the middle of valiant Nazis knights.
It would be a heroic deed for them,
Rewarded with medals for valor no doubt,
To bloody their daggers by killing an unarmed Jew.

I dimly realized it was idiotic
To do what I did, but would do it again!
I remember, strangely they looked at me.
I suppose they could not believe,
A non-Aryan, subhuman idiot, crazy to be sure,
Had thechutzpah to dare what I did.

I refused to accept their rule.
I paid the price.
That valiant Nazi thug broke my nose.
I kept my life and pride.

Thinking back over half a century,
Common sense should have made me step down
From the sidewalk to the street,

A NEW TALE FROM THE VIENNA WOODS:
"THE IDIOT'S 1939 VIENNA WALTZ!"

3

To avoid a broken nose, to risk my life.

I am the idiot with the bloody, broken nose,
Who dared dance the new 1939 Vienna Waltz.
An idiot at times is not wise.
Whatever the cost, in an act of revolt,
To defend honor, justice and self respect,
I walked through the gang of Teutonic knights.
Wise I am not.

As I read and re-read my words
And think between the lines,
With half a century of learning behind,
Hate I find,
Not only theirs without reason,
But mine for their collective crimes.

Too long was I entangled
In an ancient web of hate and lies.
Though I escaped,
It trapped the boy who broke my nose.

I never forgave that boy
For breaking my nose so long ago
And for the pain after an operation,
Fifty-four years later, to correct his crime.

No different am I than the Nazi thug,
If I sink as low as he and hate.

Berthold Goldman
1993

